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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, October 4, 1943

Subject: "PARE DOWN FOOD WASTE" Information from Food Distribution officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Are there Gremlins in your home?

On the war fronts, Gremlins are the little imaginary creatures who bother our airplane pilots and bombardiers...the little creatures who make things go wrong.

Gremlins in our homes are the little imaginary creatures who make us waste good food. One kind of Gremlin makes us plan the wrong kind of meals...meals our family won't like or that aren't healthful. Bad meal-planning wastes food.

Another kind of Gremlin lives in our icebox. This Gremlin tell us the wrong places to store our food, so that some of it spoils. This Gremlin also hides leftovers behind quarts of milk in our icebox...we can't see the leftovers and we forget about them...when we look again, it's too late to use them, because they've spoiled. This wastes food.

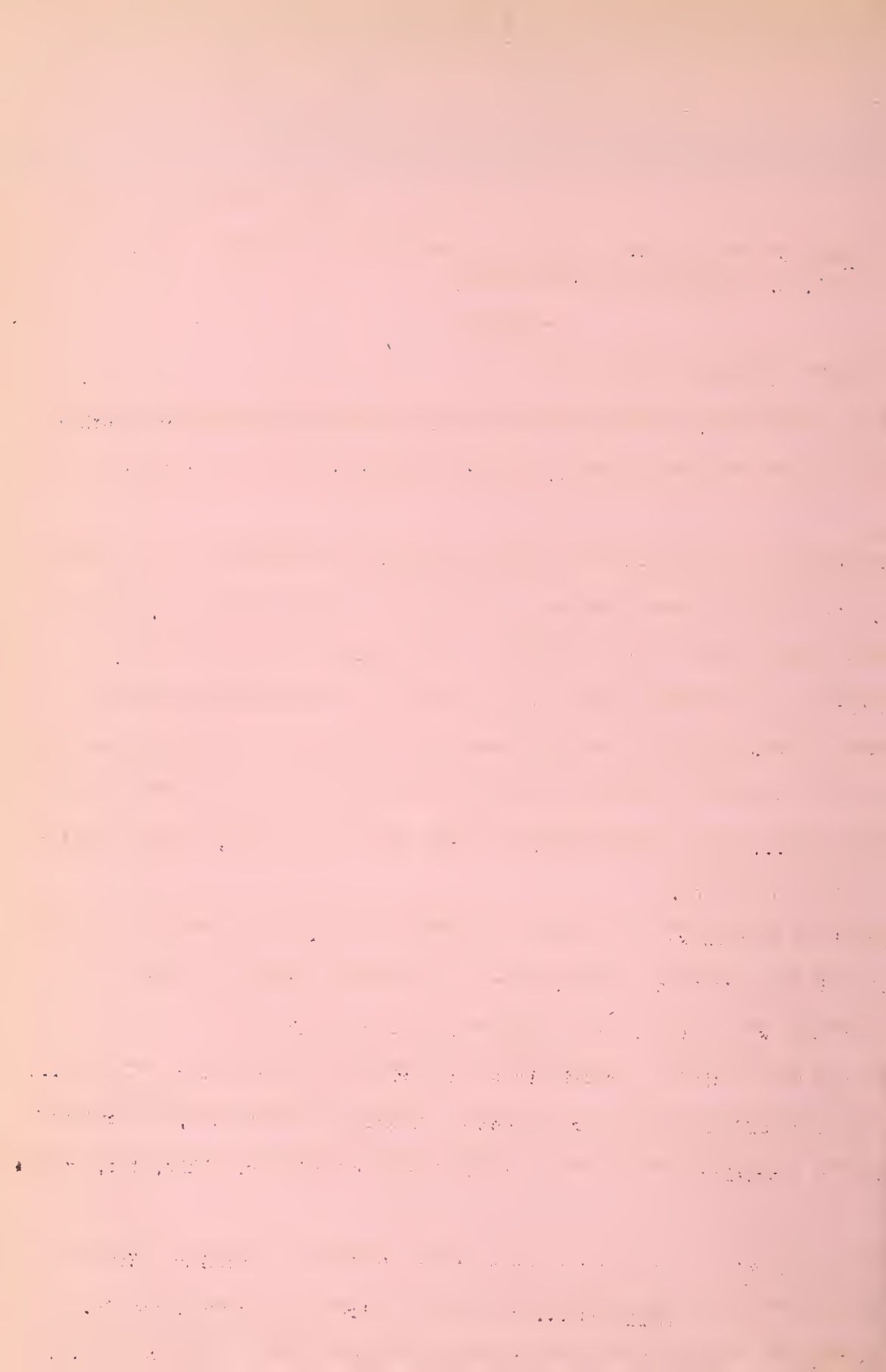
There's a Gremlin who goes along to market with us. He whispers in our ear that we should buy more than we need, or that we should handle the fruits and vegetables before we buy them. Bad shopping habits waste food.

And the fourth kind of Gremlin is the one who sits on our kitchen-knife ... who makes us pare off the vitamin rich peel of fruits and vegetables, and cut off and throw away nutritious beet tops and outer leaves of cabbage. This, too, wastes food.

How are we going to rid our homes of these food-waste Gremlins? You may not think you have any in your home...but unless you're very unusual, you do.

Garbage collectors in many places keep track of how much garbage they collect...

(over)



and studies of their records show this: for each one of us each year, 225 pounds of usable food is wasted. This doesn't include eggshells and coffee grounds... just food that could have been saved if the Gremlins hadn't gotten into it...food that could have been saved, if it had been stored, cooked, and served properly.

So when the storage Gremlin tries to get you to put your loaf of bread in the wrong place...or tries to keep you from washing out and sunning your breadbox regularly...remember what just one wasted slice of bread means. One slice of bread wasted by every family in America means 34 million slices of bread...2 million loaves of bread..think what those two million loaves would mean to hungry people in other parts of the world.

And every other little bit of waste adds up in the same startling way when you multiply it by every family in America. What you waste is a drain on our national strength..the food you save and put to proper use makes us that much stronger in our fight for freedom.

Let's go along with the grocery store Gremlin and see what we can do to get rid of him.

First thing is to buy no more fresh fruits and vegetables than we can use. Think first how ripe the fruit or vegetable is...how well it'll keep...the amount of storage space you have...how much your family can eat. If it's three pounds for a quarter, the Gremlin may tell you to buy three pounds when you only need two... but you must refuse him if it means wasted food.

We can help save food if we don't "feel" the fruit or vegetable any more than necessary. Oranges, apples, grapes, plums, melons, tomatoes, lettuce...all these get bruised and unattractive if people handle them...they spoil, and good food goes to waste. So let's learn to judge quality with our eyes instead of our fingers.

And it's our responsibility to help keep the food fit for someone else to buy. Let's put back fruits and vegetables carefully in their piles...and not toss

or drop them.

We can fool the grocerystore Gremlin by buying fruits and vegetables that are in plentiful supply, and making sure that every bit is properly used. If we can't get what we want, let's take cheerfully what we can get. The grocerystore Gremlin might say: "You've had carrots once this week." We should answer, "Yes, but they're plentiful now and I can fix them in another way.

The grocerystore Gremlin may want us to shop at the last minute...he'll run out the door, however, when we do our shopping early in the week, and early in the day. But we'll do more than get rid of this troublesome Gremlin...we'll save our own and the grocer's time...and we'll have a fresh and plentiful selection of food to choose among.

So let's get after the grocery-store Gremlin...and let's get after all the others...the meal-planning Gremlin, the storage Gremlin, the food preparation Gremlin. Perhaps you'll find other food-waste Gremlins in your home...the Gremlin who puts too much food on plates, for instance.

It's up to us to pare down food waste. If we could rid our homes entirely of these Gremlins, we'd save enough food to feed our Armed Forces...and that's a pretty big amount.

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